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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
ARA/NEA REARCSINCOMING  
R 250 CHAVEZPAGE 01 OF 02 CARACA 02944 00 OF 02 292122Z 016567 5088017  
ACTION: BAND (02)INFO: VE (02) RJ (01) MM (01) JPL (01) JRH (01) ARA (01) PPC (01)  
DAS (01) PPA (01) EPSC (04) DEPSC (01)  
----- 30/1137Z AT RD (TOTAL COPIES: 017)

ACTION ARA-00

INFO LOG-00 AMAD-01 CIAE-00 DDOE-00 UTEB-00 TEDE-00 INR-00  
NSAE-00 SP-00 NFAT-00 /002W

-----702220 292123Z /38

B 292115Z SEP 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1812  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1849

UNCLAS CARACAS 002944

USIA

FOR USIA FOR AR - PSAMSON, MINRMPSON-JBNES; STATE FOR  
ARA/AND PCHICOLA, CAKUETIEN, ARA/P - MWEISSKOH, MHANNE.B. 12958; N/A  
SUBJECT: MEDIA COVERAGE: AMBASSADOR MAISTO'S MEETING  
WITH PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HUGO CHAVEZ

REFERENCE: CARACAS 2912 (C)

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR MAISTO'S 9/25 BREAKFAST MEETING  
WITH VENEZUELAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HUGO CHAVEZ  
(REFTEL) ATTRACTED CONSIDERABLE MEDIA ATTENTION. CHAVEZ,  
WHO CURRENTLY LEADS VENEZUELAN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS, IS  
INELIGIBLE FOR A U.S. VISA BECAUSE OF HIS ROLE AS LEADER  
OF AN UNSUCCESSFUL 1992 COUP. AMBASSADOR'S INFORMALPRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE MEETING NOTED THAT THE  
AMBASSADOR WAS MEETING WITH ALL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES  
AND THAT THE U.S.'S INTEREST IS NOT WHO WILL WIN THE  
DECEMBER 6 ELECTIONS, BUT RATHER THAT THE PROCESS BE  
CONSTITUTIONAL AND TRANSPARENT. END SUMMARY.

## THE HEADLINES

2. AMBASSADOR MET SEPTEMBER 25 WITH PRESIDENTIAL  
CANDIDATE HUGO CHAVEZ AS PART OF A SERIES OF MEETINGS  
WITH ALL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR THE ELECTION TO BE  
HELD DECEMBER 6. CHAVEZ AND THE AMBASSADOR HELD  
SEPARATE INFORMAL PRESS CONFERENCES FOLLOWING THE  
MEETINGS. SAMPLE SEPTEMBER 26 HEADLINES: "U.S. WILL  
SUPPORT A CONSTITUTIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC VENEZUELAN  
GOVERNMENT: THE U.S. AMBASSADOR AND (CANDIDATE CHAVEZ)  
AGREE ON THE NEED TO MAINTAIN BILATERAL AND TRADE  
RELATIONS BETWEEN BOTH COUNTRIES -- MAISTO AND CHAVEZ  
SPOKE FOR FOUR HOURS" (SIC) -- THE MEETING LASTED A  
LITTLE MORE THAN THREE -- INFLUENTIAL NATIONAL LIBERAL  
DAILY "EL NACIONAL"; "HUGO CHAVEZ AFFIRMS GUARANTEES FOR  
FOREIGN INVESTORS -- 'WE WILL RESPECT OUR GOOD RELATIONS  
WITH THE U.S.' -- LEADING CONSERVATIVE NATIONAL DAILY  
"EL UNIVERSAL"; "U.S. VOWS TO RESPECT OUTCOME OF  
ELECTION -- CHAVEZ ASSURES HE WILL HONOR ALL THE  
ACCORDS" -- ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY "THE DAILY JOURNAL",  
WIDELY READ IN THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY;  
"ACCORDS WITH U.S. WILL NOT BE ALTERED" -- LIBERAL  
NATIONAL DAILY "EL GLOBO"; "JOHN MAISTO EXPLAINS  
CARDINAL POINTS OF U.S. POLICY TO VENEZUELAN CANDIDATES"AND "CHAVEZ AND JOHN MAISTO SPEND THREE HOURS REVIEWING  
THE COUNTRY'S ELECTORAL SITUATION" -- POPULAR NATIONAL  
DAILY TABLOID "ULTIMAS NOTICIAS"; "THERE ARE CREDIBILITY  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ADOLPH H EISNER  
DATE/CASE-ID: 16 NOV 2009 200503654CARACA 02944 00 OF 02 292122Z 016567 5088017  
PROBLEMS, AND THEY CHALLENGE THE POLITICAL CLASS --  
CANDIDATES' STATEMENTS AFFECT DECISIONS OF THE  
GOVERNMENT AND OF INVESTORS. U.S. AMBASSADOR JOHN MAISTO  
AFFIRMS -- POPULAR NATIONAL DAILY "2001". THE MEETING  
WAS THE LEAD STORY ON ALL VENEZUELAN TV NETWORKS FRIDAY  
EVENING, FEATURING EXTENSIVE FOOTAGE OF THE INFORMAL,  
SEPARATE POST-BREAKFAST PRESS CONFERENCES OF CHAVEZ AND  
THE AMBASSADOR.

VIS-A-VIS A VISA

3. CHAVEZ'S CAMP HAD ANNOUNCED THE BREAKFAST MEETING IN  
ADVANCE. SINCE MANY IN THE MEDIA HAD BEEN REPORTING THAT  
THE VISA QUESTION WAS KEY TO U.S.-CHAVEZ RELATIONS, IT  
HAD BEEN SUGGESTED THAT FRIDAY'S ENCOUNTER WOULD SIGNAL  
A CHANGE IN CHAVEZ'S STATUS. PAGE ONE BANNER HEADLINE  
IN NATIONAL DAILY "EL DIARIO DE CARACAS" SEPTEMBER 25  
READ, "IN SEARCH OF A VISA -- HUGO CHAVEZ BREAKFASTS  
WITH U.S. AMBASSADOR". IN THEIR SUBSEQUENT PRESS  
CONFERENCES, HOWEVER, BOTH CHAVEZ AND THE AMBASSADOR  
COULD REPORT THAT THE QUESTION OF CHAVEZ'S VISA NEVER  
CAME UP DURING THEIR DISCUSSIONS.

## THE ISSUES - U.S. INTERESTS

4. ALL MEDIA NOTED AMB. MAISTO'S EMPHASIS THAT THE U.S.  
INTEREST WAS THAT THE DECEMBER ELECTIONS BE FREE, FAIR,  
CONSTITUTIONAL AND TRANSPARENT. THEY ALL ALSO REPORTED  
THAT THE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH CHAVEZ WAS ONLY ONE  
OF A SERIES OF MEETINGS HE HOPED TO HAVE WITH ALL  
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES.

## THE IMPACT

5. AMBASSADOR MAISTO'S MEETING WITH CANDIDATE CHAVEZ,  
AND THE SUBSEQUENT MEDIA COVERAGE, HELPED PUT TO REST  
SOME OF THE MYTHOLOGY CONCERNING THE U.S. ROLE IN THE  
UPCOMING ELECTIONS:

MYTH NO. 1 -- THE U.S. IS ANTI-CHAVEZ.

IN FACT: MEDIA COVERAGE CARRIED THE MESSAGE THAT THE

U.S. WAS NOT CONCERNED WITH WHO WINS THE ELECTION, BUT,  
INSTEAD, WITH HOW THE ELECTION IS CONDUCTED.MYTH NO. 2 -- AMBASSADOR MAISTO'S MEETING WITH CHAVEZ  
MEANS THAT THE EMBASSY ASSUMES CHAVEZ IS THE NEXT  
VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT.IN FACT: COVERAGE POINTED OUT THAT THE AMBASSADOR PLANS  
TO MEET WITH ALL CANDIDATES REGARDLESS OF POLL STANDING.MYTH NO. 3 -- THE MEETING SINGLED THAT CHAVEZ WOULD  
RECEIVE A U.S. VISA.IN FACT: QUOTING BOTH CHAVEZ AND AMBASSADOR MAISTO, THE  
MEDIA ACCURATELY REPORTED THAT THE VISA QUESTION NEVER  
AROSE.6. COMMENT: THE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH CHAVEZ, AND  
THE HIGH VISIBILITY GIVEN TO IT, RELIEVED MUCH OF THE  
TENSION AND UNCERTAINTY THAT HAS BEEN MANUFACTURED ABOUT

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U.S. - VENEZUELAN RELATIONS UNDER A POSSIBLE CHAVEZ PRESIDENCY. THE QUESTION OF A U.S. VISA FOR CHAVEZ MAY CONTINUE TO BE A CAMPAIGN ISSUE, BUT THE FACT THAT THE U.S. HAS NOT CHANGED ITS POSITION SHOULD NO LONGER BE IN DOUBT. AT THE SAME TIME, AMBASSADOR MAISTO DELIVERED THE CLEAR AND WIDELY REPORTED MESSAGE THAT THE U.S. EXPECTS NOTHING LESS THAN ADHERENCE TO DEMOCRATIC, CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS AND IN THE FOLLOW-ON GOVERNMENT. FINALLY, THE FACT THAT THE AMBASSADOR PROPOSES TO MEET WITH AS MANY OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AS POSSIBLE BELIES THE NOTION THAT THE U.S. IS PLAYING FAVORITES, AND CEMENTS THE FACT THAT THE U.S. INTEREST IS IN THE PROCESS, NOT THE CANDIDATES. END COMMENT.

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